



Department of English Doctoral Candidacy Requirements

The University of Calgary [Graduate Candidacy Regulations](#) (“the Regulations”) govern the conduct of admission to graduate candidacy at the University of Calgary. This document establishes program specific requirements associated with the conduct of admission to graduate candidacy under the *Regulations*.

Admission to candidacy acknowledges that students are fully prepared to devote their attention to their thesis research and to professional development. Students will demonstrate: a critical understanding of the current state of knowledge in their field, along with its major problems and debates; sufficient breadth to prepare for university-level teaching in literary studies, as well as specialist knowledge sufficient to prepare them to teach at the senior undergraduate level. The candidacy process provides students with the groundwork to conceptualize, design, critique, and implement research for the generation of original knowledge and its application in their particular field. It also provides them with transferable skills necessary for employment in both academic and non-academic settings, emphasizing initiative, accountability, and decision-making in complex and unforeseen situations. Acquiring the independence required for ongoing professional development, students will learn how to develop appropriate guidelines and procedures for the responsible conduct of both research and teaching, and demonstrate the ethical behaviour consistent with academic integrity.

All doctoral students in the English Graduate Program must successfully complete the following candidacy components. Also consult our program entry in the [University Graduate Calendar](#) and our [department graduate website](#) where all appropriate [forms and paperwork](#) can also be found.

1. Required course work.
2. Second language requirement.
3. Field of study written examination.
4. Field of study oral examination.
5. Final thesis proposal and meeting.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

Year 1: Courses (at least 5 of 6 required HCEs within 12 months of registration, in addition to Graduate Pro-seminar). Courses are offered Fall, Winter and Spring terms.

Years 2-3: Field of Study written and oral examinations (to be completed no later than 24th month of registration).

Year 3: Final thesis proposal and review meeting with supervisory committee (by 28th month of registration).



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The Department of English strongly recommends that doctoral students complete all candidacy requirements in 26 months and all degree requirements within five years. The Faculty of Graduate Studies permits 28 months and six years, respectively.

COURSE WORK REQUIREMENTS

Doctoral students in the Department of English must complete a minimum of 18 units of course work (3.0 full-course equivalents). Please note that:

- Students must demonstrate (often through previous course work at the graduate level) a basic knowledge of research methods and professional skills equivalent to ENGL 691 (Graduate Pro-Seminar). Students who cannot do so must take ENGL 691, which is a credit/fail course taken *in addition to* the 18 units (3.0 FCE) of required courses.
- At least 18 units of course work (2.5 FCE) will normally be completed before the Field of Study
- Students must demonstrate that they meet the historical breadth requirement. This requirement may be met through previous course work at the graduate level, and comprises:
 - At least 6 units in literature from the twentieth century and after, **and**
 - At least 6 units of cumulative English courses from before 1900. Courses must focus on literature from that period.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

Doctoral students in the Department of English must demonstrate a reading knowledge of a language other than English. Students are encouraged to establish competency in a language that contains a body of texts relevant to their program of study. Students who do not meet the requirement should consult with the Graduate Program Director upon initial registration for advice. The language requirement must be complete before the 25th month of registration, usually September of the second year. This requirement can be met in one of three ways, by:

1. Earning a minimum grade of "B" in 6 units (1.0 full-course equivalent) of course work at a senior (300 or higher) level.
2. Passing the department reading exam, normally set twice a year.
3. Providing documentation of native proficiency in a language other than English. It is the responsibility of the student to supply evidence to the Graduate Program Director of proficiency or of course work in a language at another university or institution.

FIELD OF STUDY (FOS) WRITTEN EXAMINATION



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Field Reading Lists

- Approved reading lists represent a range of fields in literary studies: students are advised to choose their field of study in consultation with their supervisor, in order to determine how suitable the field is for their professional goals and thesis research. Field lists are available [on the department website](#).
- A student may submit to the Graduate Program Director revised reading lists, approved by the supervisory committee. Substitutions may not constitute more than 20% of the field list, which is normally comprised of about 100 text-equivalents. Some field lists have open modules; substitutions are not permitted on these lists.
- Students may request a field list be created, but must do so by May of their first year (or within 9 months of registration), and consult with their supervisor, who will assist in the list's creation.
- All students must submit their field reading list, with or without revisions, and in proper MLA format, with any changes clearly indicated, along with supervisory committee approval and signatures, no less than six weeks before the written exam is scheduled.

Examination Committee

The FoS written examination committee will consist of all members of the Supervisory Committee.

Scheduling of Written Examination

The examination should be completed no later than the end of the 20th month after initial registration (usually the end of May in Year II); with the oral examination scheduled no earlier than two weeks and no later than one month after the written examination is submitted (that is, no later than the 24th month after registration, usually end of August). Students and committees must keep in mind that the thesis proposal needs several weeks to write, revise, and go through the committee review process.

Format and process of the Written examination

- Questions for the written examination are based on the approved and revised field reading list are developed by the supervisory committee and approved by the Graduate Executive Committee.
- The written examination is a take-home examination that consists of three papers, each requiring the student to answer one of two questions (for a total of three out of six questions). Students will pick up or be e-mailed the examination questions from the English Graduate Program Office three weeks before the date they are required to submit the completed examination to the Department. Each answer to a question on the take-home



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examination normally ranges from 3500 to 4000 words, must be carefully edited and proofread, and include a bibliography.

Outcome of the Written Examination

Within one week of receiving the student's completed FoS written examination papers, each member of the supervisory committee will evaluate them, judging whether the papers are of sufficient quality to proceed to the FoS oral examination. All answers must demonstrate a critical analysis of each question or topic posed, as well as informed, insightful, and well-reasoned responses that incorporate clear knowledge of the chosen field of study. Written answers are assessed on the use of relevant literature and techniques, organization, literary competence, originality, quality of argument, and presentation.

- If a written examination is judged, overall, to be of sufficient quality, the committee member will give that examination a "pass". If a written examination, overall, is determined by the committee member to be a "fail", he or she will provide a brief account of the examination's shortcomings and suggest what remedial actions are needed. Each committee member will submit to the Graduate Program Director an assessment of the examination (i.e., "pass" or "fail" and remedial actions recommended) within one week of receiving the completed FoS written examination answers.
- A FoS written examination is a "pass" if the majority of the FoS supervisory committee have judged the examination to be a "pass". In the event of a tied vote, or if the majority have judged the exam to be a "fail," the written examination will be a "fail".
- The Graduate Program Director will inform the student, supervisor and supervisory committee members of the final recommendation on the results of the written examination within one business day of receiving all examination committee members' assessments. If the student has received a failing result, the scheduled oral examination will not take place.

*For further information about outcomes, please refer to the final section of this document, **RETAKES, REASSESSMENTS, AND APPEALS OF REQUIRED CANDIDACY COMPONENTS.***

FIELD OF STUDY (FOS) ORAL EXAMINATION

The purpose of the oral examination is to allow for elaboration, discussion and defence of the written examination responses. The oral examination also requires students to extend and articulate arguments and lines of inquiry in an oral format, to clarify work they have completed on the written examination, and to demonstrate their knowledge of the reading list overall. As the field of study prepares students for thesis research, they are expected to demonstrate evidence of critical acuity, the ability to defend and sustain arguments, to read texts closely, and to sustain informed discussion of contemporary scholarly, critical and theoretical debates. Students are prepared for this process primarily by their supervisory committee, and through



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seminars that focus on strategies for taking oral examinations. Students in the English department must be aware that the FoS written and oral exams are designed to prepare them for in-depth field and thesis research, context for future study, and for teaching at the senior level.

Examination committee

The FoS oral examination committee consists of supervisory committee members, an additional departmental member, a member external to the department, and a neutral chair. The supervisor is a voting member; the neutral chair is non-voting. A postdoctoral fellow whose supervisor is on the examination committee cannot be a member of the committee. Examination committee membership is approved by the Graduate Executive Committee.

Scheduling of FoS Oral Examination

Normally, the FOS oral examination will occur within three weeks of completion of the FoS written examinations: no sooner than two weeks and no later than four weeks after the written examination has been submitted.

Format and Process of the Oral Examination

- A student may begin the examination with a short presentation, usually limited to 10 minutes of the examination time. The student and supervisor will meet to discuss this use of examination time, and the supervisor must inform the neutral chair of the student's intention to make use of this time at the outset of the exam.
- The questions asked of the student during the FoS oral examination will not be circulated to the student. However, the student's FoS written examination answers and field reading list will be circulated among all examiners and will serve as a basis for questioning at the oral.
- No one other than a member of the examination committee is allowed to question the candidate. All examiners should be given an opportunity to question the candidate during the early part of the examination, by rounds of questioning. The exam will be chaired by a neutral chair from the department.
- Questions may address the full range of texts on the approved reading list, and will normally begin with questions about the written FoS examination.
- Questions should be clear and succinct, with the student being given reasonable time to answer. If the student has understood the question and cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question. The neutral chair should guard against any tendency of examiners to interact with each other instead of concentrating on the questions for the candidate.



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- Answers from the candidate should demonstrate a critical analysis of each question or topic posed, as well as informed, insightful, and well-reasoned responses that incorporate knowledge of the relevant Field.
- The Chair must stop the exam if one of the examiners or the student needs to leave the room and will reconvene the exam when all examiners are present.
- The Chair should note any peculiarities of the exam or deviations from the expected process.
- The examination should not exceed two hours. This does not include the deliberation time of the Committee but does include preliminary comments by the student. Examinations are closed.

Outcome of the Oral Examination

- At the end of the examination, the student will be asked to withdraw from the room. Before any discussion of the candidate's performance overall, examiners will identify by straw vote which recommendation (pass/fail) each favours for the examination, thus providing the committee with a basis for discussion of the student's performance.
- Every effort should be made through discussion to reach a unanimous recommendation. However, should the outcome of the final vote include one negative vote, the candidate will pass. Should the outcome include two or more negative votes, the committee's recommendation will be "fail".
- The Neutral Chair will communicate the overall result of the exam to the student as soon as the oral examination deliberations are complete and will record the final recommendation on the *Report of FoS Oral Examination* for submission to the Graduate Program Office.
- In the case of a failing result:
 - the Neutral Chair will record the final recommendation on the *Report of FoS Oral Examination*, and submit a written report about the oral examination to the Graduate Program Director within five working days of the completion of the examination.
 - The Graduate Program Director, after consultation with the Supervisor and members of the examination committee, will meet with the student to discuss mentorship, and options and processes for a re-take.
 - The Graduate Program must send the *notice of a failed candidacy component* to the student within ten working days from the date of the examination.

Any outcome of the oral examination is a recommendation to the Graduate Program Director.

For further information about outcomes, please refer to the final section of this document, RETAKES, REASSESSMENTS, AND APPEALS OF REQUIRED CANDIDACY COMPONENTS.



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FINAL THESIS PROPOSAL, MEETING AND REVIEW

The final thesis proposal and supervisory committee review is the final component of candidacy, taking place after the oral Field of Study examination, and before the end of the 28th month of registration. Please note that, depending on when the oral field of study examination is scheduled, the timing of the oral field of study examination and the thesis proposal review may be tight. Students are strongly encouraged to work with their supervisory committee to ensure that they can complete their field examinations and final thesis proposal in good time. Students will begin the thesis proposal process immediately after the FoS oral examination.

Preparation and Format of Thesis Proposal

The student will develop a proposal that establishes a structure, timeline, literature review, and research questions that satisfy the supervisory committee as to the originality, soundness and feasibility of the thesis project. For creative writers, in particular, the thesis proposal may also include a draft of writing-in-progress. The thesis proposal will usually range from 5,000 words minimum to 10,000 words maximum, and will in addition include a 5-7 pp. bibliography. The content, structure, and details of the proposal will be the result of close consultation with the supervisory committee. The supervisor will determine when the proposal is ready for committee review. [Proposal guidelines](#) can be found on the PhD Forms page of the department's Graduate Students webpage.

Outcome of Thesis Proposal Review and Meeting

- When the thesis proposal is ready, it will be assessed in a meeting between the student and the supervisory committee. The supervisor as chair will ensure that all committee members and the student participate in discussion and questions about the thesis proposal. The purpose of the proposal review is to provide the student with an opportunity to discuss a plan for thesis research and completion, and for each committee member to provide constructive feedback. The meeting will last no longer than two hours, not including deliberation.
- Approval of the thesis proposal indicates that the Supervisory Committee believes that the project in its details can be carried out by the student in a reasonable time and will likely meet or exceed the Faculty of Graduate Studies' requirements for doctoral thesis quality ([Graduate Calendar L. Theses – L.1 Quality of Thesis](#)).
- During deliberation, there are four possible options for the committee: 1. Approved with no revisions; 2. Approved with minor revisions; 3. Approved pending major revisions, or 4. Not Approved. A second thesis proposal meeting is required only if the committee decides that the thesis proposal is Not Approved. If the decision results in an extension to candidacy, the supervisor must make a note of this.



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- The thesis proposal can be formally approved at the end of the meeting, if no revisions or minor revisions are required. Minor revisions will normally be completed within two weeks of the meeting. Major revisions will normally be completed within a month of the review meeting. Supervisory committee members will withhold signatures until major revisions are completed.
- At the end of the proposal review meeting, the supervisor will submit to the Graduate Program Office *Supervisory Committee's Recommendation on Final PhD Thesis Proposal*. Approved thesis proposals (with all necessary revisions made) will be submitted to the Graduate Program Director.

Any outcome of the thesis review meeting is a recommendation to the Graduate Program Director.

*For further information about outcomes, please refer to the final section of this document, **RETAKES, REASSESSMENTS, AND APPEALS OF REQUIRED CANDIDACY COMPONENTS**.*

COMPLETION OF CANDIDACY REQUIREMENTS

Upon completion of all candidacy requirements, the Graduate Program Director will sign the completed Departmental Candidacy Requirements Checklist and the Graduate Program Administrator will generate the *Recommendation for Admission to Candidacy* form and submit it to FGS (gpoform@ucalgary.ca).

RETAKES, REASSESSMENTS, AND APPEALS OF REQUIRED CANDIDACY COMPONENTS

The University recognizes that there are instances when a student may wish to challenge University or departmental decisions about grades or academic policy. When a dispute arises, every effort should be made to resolve the issues informally rather than resort to a formal appeal. Please consult the reassessment and appeals procedures for candidacy components in the Department of English, below. There are departmental reassessment and appeal procedures for any candidacy component not specifically required by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. For others, or if appeals are not resolved by departmental or Faculty of Arts processes, students may appeal directly to FGS. In any situation, if a formal appeal is necessary, Faculty of Graduate Studies procedures are outlined in the Calendar, under **K.5 Appeals of Decisions Regarding Candidacy Components**.

Course Work and Language Requirement

Students wishing to appeal a decision about grades, course policies or academic policies should first attempt to resolve the concerns informally, and approach the



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Graduate Program Director or the Department Head for advice on how to proceed. Grade re-appraisals for graduate courses should be directed first to the Department Head. Students should provide reasons for their reappraisal request. Please note that course grade appeals are heard by the teaching faculty (the Faculty of Arts for English courses) if they progress beyond the departmental level. Consult the Graduate Program Director or Department Head about failure to meet the language requirement by the 24th month of registration, either through course work, or departmental reading exams. Further appeal procedures are outlined at [K.5 Appeals of Decisions Regarding Candidacy Components](#).

Field of Study Written Examination

- In the case of a failing result, the Graduate Program Director will meet with the student to discuss examining committee reports, and make specific arrangements with the supervisor and supervisory committee for further mentoring before a retake examination.
- The student will be entitled to re-take the exam no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the first examination.
- Students may make two attempts to complete the examination successfully, after which they may be required to withdraw from the program. The graduate program must send the *Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress* to gpoform@ucalgary.ca.
- Further appeal procedures are outlined under [K.5 Appeals of Decisions Regarding Candidacy Components](#).

Field of Study Oral Examination

- In the case of a failing result, the Graduate Program Director will meet with the student to discuss examining committee reports, and make specific arrangements with the supervisor and supervisory committee members for further mentoring before a retake examination.
- The student will be entitled to re-take the exam no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the first examination.
- Normally, the examination committee for a re-take examination will consist of the same members.
- Students may make two attempts to complete the examination successfully, after which they may be required to withdraw from the program. The graduate program must send the *Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress* to gpoform@ucalgary.ca.



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- Further appeal procedures are outlined under **[K.5 Appeals of Decisions Regarding Candidacy Components](#)**.

Final Thesis Proposal Review and Meeting

- If a Thesis Proposal is “Not Approved”, the student will be requested to remedy the problematic areas identified in writing by the Supervisory Committee and to resubmit the Thesis Proposal.
- As per FGS requirements, the Thesis Proposal must be revised and resubmitted within two to six months of receiving notification of the failing result and a second Thesis Proposal Meeting held.
- Students may make two attempts to successfully complete the Thesis Proposal component. After both attempts they may be required to withdraw from the program. The graduate program must send the *Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress* to gpoform@ucalgary.ca.
- The student has the right to appeal the decision. Further appeal procedures are outlined under **[K.5 Appeals of Decisions Regarding Candidacy Components](#)**.

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